

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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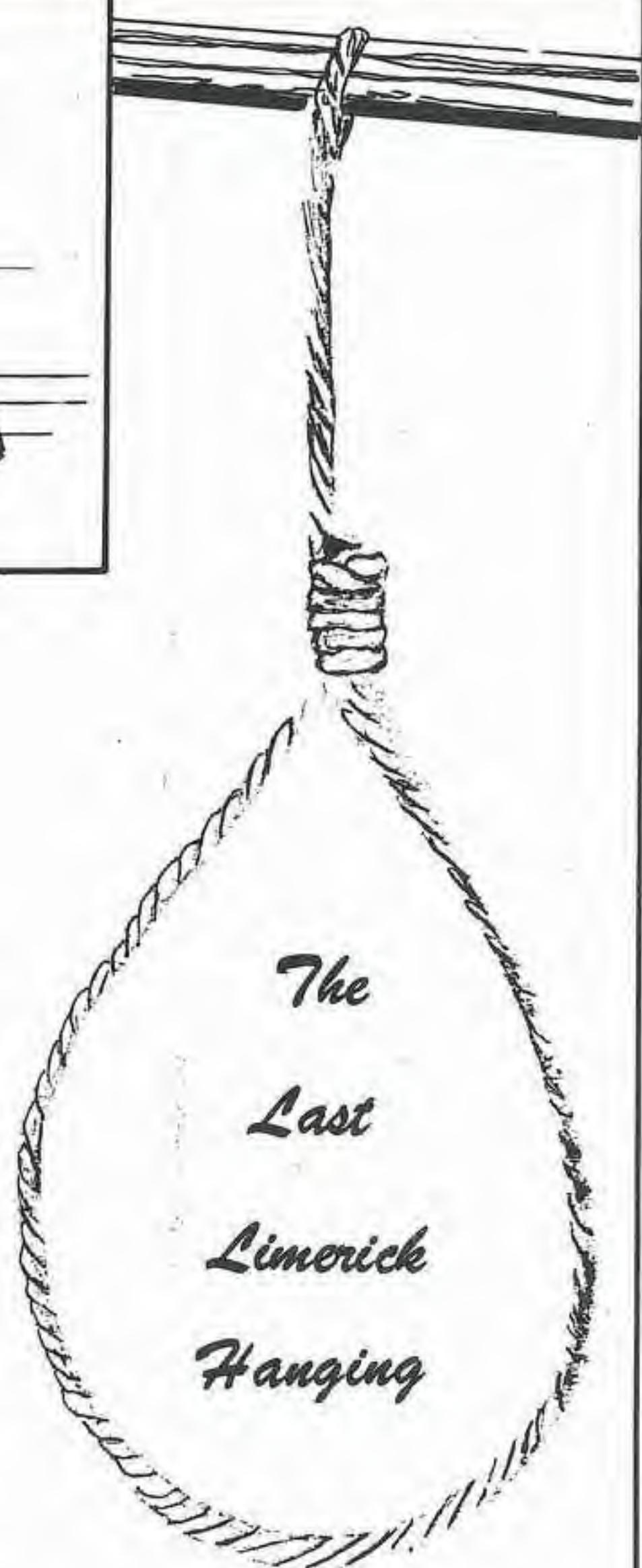
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That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic

James Connolly

THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

## DAINGEAN DAYS



William Marwood THE HANGMAN

## PART FOUR

# DAINGEAN DAYS

WITNESS TO OBSCENITY

If only the night-watchman hadn't been late coming on duty in the dormitory that night, it might never have happened. But he was late, a whole hour late. There had been some breakdown in communications and Brother Stack had left the dormitory at half past eight, expecting Mr. Donegan, a local villager, to arrive at any minute and take over his vigil for the night.

We had said our night prayers in the chapel at eight and had then been marched across the dark, wintry quadrangle towards the junior boys' dormitory where the junior boys, from twelve to fifteen, slept in two long rows of iron beds spaced evenly along the full length of the green-painted walls. The senior boys, from sixteen to twenty, had their dormitory at the opposite end of the school, and were watched over for the night by yet another civilian nightwatchman.

There was no supper at Daingean. The last meal of the day was tea at five o'clock, which consisted of a plate of porridge and two slices of bread and dripping, washed down by lukewarm, unsweetened tea contained in a rusty tin mug. The porridge and tea were poured out on all the tables about ten minutes before the boys were marched into the refectory and so were barely lukewarm when the boys finally sat down after a prolonged Grace-before-Meals. The Grace itself might have to be repeated three or four times until the Brother on duty was satisfied that it had been said in perfect unison by the ravenously hungry mob.

Iron discipline was the rule at Daingean, and God help any boy who stepped out of line. The school was run by a religious order called the Oblates of Mary Immaculate whose headquarters in Ireland are at Inchicore, Dublin. The order is made up of both priests and lay brothers. It is not a teaching order and the brothers are "workers" without any formal qualifications. The only rules at Daingean were the Ten Commandments. A boy who did wrong did not commit a breach of discipline; he committed a sin. And sin had to be punished far more severely than purely temporal misdeeds. To remove a crust of bread from the swill-bin, as many of the starving boys were wont to do, was to break the Seventh Commandment. This merited a flogging. To say "Christ" or "Jesus", unless you happened to be on your bended knees in the chapel, was to break the Second Commandment. A boy who was rash enough not to comply instantly with an order given by a Brother broke the Fourth Commandment.

Rude and vulgar language, which by its very nature is bound to have some sexual overtones, was only one step short of the ultimate sin in the eyes of the priests and brothers — undue familiarity with another boy. For both these sins the brothers invoked the Sixth Commandment. The penalty was a severe flogging followed by a diet of bread-and-water kneeling on the concrete floor of the refectory for a week.

I suppose it was a combination of hunger and the pent-up frustrations of the harsh discipline that made some of the junior boys go a bit wild that night in the hour between Brother Stack's departure and the arrival of Mr. Donegan at nine-thirty. Not that anything very serious happened. There were a few innocent pillow fights, a certain amount of mock wrestling which, I remember, involved at least two Limerick boys whom I still meet in the street today, and a great deal of shouting. There was one boy, Mick Houlihan from Cahirciveen in the County Kerry, who did a little more swearing than the others. If a priest or brother walked in all the Ten Commandments would have been invoked and half the dormitory of a hundred boys would have been flogged.

But, tragically, one brother did see and hear. And that brother was the most savagely sadistic member of the Order in

by SEAN BOURKE

Daingean. Brother Fitzpatrick was from County Clare, and on that dark wintry night in October 1949 he was standing on an upturned butter box on the grass verge outside the dormitory wall peeping in through one of the uncurtained windows, invisible in his black habit to the unsuspecting boys inside and to the other brothers and priests who might be passing on the outside.

Equally tragic was the fact that Mick Houlihan worked in the priests' and brothers' kitchen with four other boys, including myself. And the man in charge of the kitchen was Brother Fitzpatrick.

The principle that an accused be punished only once for his crime did not apply in Daingean. Apart from the punishment meted out by the Prefect of Discipline, there were other beatings administered by the brother in charge of the boy's working party and by any other brother who just happened to be on duty in the exercise yard or the refectory when the accused came in sight. And Brother Fitzpatrick was in charge of Mick Houlihan's party in the kitchen.

Brother Fitzpatrick had a ritual which he had carefully developed and perfected over the years. A boy must not be punished too quickly; he must be made to suffer the mental torture of knowing that he is going to be beaten without knowing when or for what reason. And so, when the five of us arrived in the kitchen to start work at nine o'clock that morning exchanging a little cheerful banter, Brother Fitzpatrick carried out the first move of his sadistic ritual. "Keep quiet and get on with yeer work!" He looked Mick Houlihan straight in the face and scowled. "And that goes for you too, Houlihan. Get on with your washing-up!"

And so the ritual began. It was familiar to all of us. In exactly two hours, as the clock struck eleven, Mick Houlihan would be beaten. And between now and then none of us would utter one word to each other lest we be made to join the wretched Mick on the sacrificial altar of Brother Fitzpatrick's sadistic lust.

The soup was made. The roast was in the oven for the priests and brothers. The breakfast pots and pans and cups and saucers were washed and shined. I myself as senior boy had laid out the cutlery and the various items of delph on the crisp white linen in the priests' and brothers' refectory. Brother Fitzpatrick sat on a chair next to the work-table against the kitchen wall opposite the long anthracite range reading his breviary, his pale lips moving silently in an ashen face. Mick Houlihan was over at the sink washing a plate for the tenth time, afraid to look up, visibly trembling. The silence was almost physical in its oppressiveness.

The kitchen clock struck eleven. Brother Fitzpatrick slowly closed his breviary, kissed it, and placed it on the shelf above the table. He got to his feet and walked to the small gap between the table and the dresser. He reached in and pulled out a stick about three feet long and an inch across. Nicholas O'Grady from Kilkenny picked up a sweeping brush and started towards the scullery in a desperate effort to escape what was to follow. "Put that brush down and stay where you are!" Brother Fitzpatrick growled. It was part of the ritual that when a boy was to be beaten the others must watch. The fear in their young faces was something Brother Fitzpatrick seemed to get great satisfaction from.

Mick Houlihan was still washing the same plate, afraid to stop, afraid to be idle and add to his guilt. "Put that plate down and turn round!" Mick did as he was told.

"You are the dirtiest little scut it has ever been my

misfortune to meet. You are dirty and filthy and evil-minded. Well, I'm going to teach you a lesson that you will never forget. Hold out your hand!"

Mick Houlihan held out his right hand. He thrust it forward fully and firmly, as if to show Brother Fitzpatrick that whatever he had done wrong he was sorry for it and was prepared to take his punishment like a man and maybe Brother Fitzpatrick in his mercy would take this into account. But this bold and frightened gesture was wasted and Mick Houlihan, at fourteen and a half years of age, was to receive the most vicious and sadistic beating I have ever seen inflicted on another human being.

Brother Fitzpatrick reduced Mick Houlihan's right hand to a black and blue pulp of bleeding flesh from the finger-tips to the elbow, and then ordered him to hold out his left hand. He did the same to this, bringing the stick back over his head and then down with all his physical might on Mick's trembling flesh. By this time, Mick Houlihan was begging for mercy. "Please, sir, oh please, sir, I won't do it any more sir, I won't, sir, I won't, sir . . ."

"Shut up your whimpering, you cowardly little wretch!" Brother Fitzpatrick's face was by now a sickly white in colour and his lips trembled visibly. He looked almost epileptic. "You are filthy and disgusting. You have a foul mouth. You have a dirty mind. You are totally obscene. You are a dirty little coward who cannot take his punishment. And you are a robber and a Daingean boy. That is the testimonial you will take out into the world with you when you go. And I hope you are proud of it, you filthy wretch!"

"Oh, please, sir, please, sir, I won't do it any more, sir. It was a slip of the tongue, sir . . ." By this time Mick Houlihan's knees were giving way under the sheer agony of his ordeal, and his torrential tears were forming a small pool at his feet. "Please, sir, please, sir . . ." He looked like he was on the point of fainting. Surely Brother Fitzpatrick must stop now.

"Roll up your sleeves to your shoulders".

Mick Houlihan looked at him in horror. "Oh, please, sir, please"

Brother Fitzpatrick delivered three rapid blows to Mick's upper left arm, then three more to the right causing the shirt sleeves to sink into the sweat-soaked flesh with the force. "When I tell you to do something, you do it!"

"Yes, sir, yes, sir . . ." Mick's fingers were by now twice their normal size and he could not bend them at the joints. His hands and forearms looked like joints of raw meat that had been left hanging in a butcher's shop too long and had putrefied. He made a feeble gesture at forcing his sleeves up past the elbows but could not do so. His elbow joints, as well as his fingers, were beyond use. "I c-c-can't, sir, I c-c-can't . . ." The sweat was pouring down his forehead in large beads. "I'm sorry, sir, I'm sorry, sir . . ."

"You filthy dirty wretch!" Brother Fitzpatrick leaned the stick against the wall and grabbed hold of Mick Houlihan. He forced both his sleeves up to the shoulders and picked up the stick once more. The contrast between the lower half of Mick Houlihan's arms and the upper was quite frightening and sickening. The broken black and blue flesh gave way at the elbows to the smooth, white skin of the upper arms and biceps so characteristic of the Daingean boy deprived of the sun. I felt myself trembling with fear and impotent rage and a deep loving compassion for Mick Houlihan in his terrible agony. The other three boys, from Longford, Wicklow and Cork, stood transfixed at their respective places of labour, terrified to make a sound or a movement.

Realising that Mick Houlihan was no longer physically capable of actively cooperating in this obscene ritual, Brother Fitzpatrick no longer told him to extend his hands. Instead he proceeded to lash Mick on the upper arms with all his force

and continued for at least another five minutes until Mick's entire arms, from the fingers to the shoulders, were no longer recognisable as human limbs.

"Oh, God, oh, God! Please, Brother Fitzpatrick, please, sir, please . . ."

Mick Houlihan fell to his knees at last, his young boy's strength and endurance finally spent. Sitting on his haunches, he eased his body forward and rested his forehead on the ground, his chin touching his knees. His arms hung loosely by his side, completely out of control, and the blood, trickling down his broken flesh, paused for a second at the finger-tips, and then fell to the floor to mingle with his sweat. He had finished pleading and he just moaned softly to himself.

"Dirty cowardly filthy wretch!" With all his might, Brother Fitzpatrick delivered three final blows to Mick Houlihan's quivering back. The stick made a sickening thud as it fell and Mick Houlihan eased over on his side and lay still.

Brother Fitzpatrick looked across at me and then at the other three boys in turn. His face was contorted almost beyond recognition and he seemed to be shaking all over. When he spoke, his breath came in short gasps.

"Let that be a lesson to all of ye. There is enough filth and dirt in this world without ye people starting. Even to think an impure thought is a mortal sin. If ye haven't got the strength to avoid temptation and sin, then by God I'll give ye that strength — with this!" He held the stick tightly in his right hand until the knuckles were white and jabbed it rhythmically at each of us in turn. "With this", he repeated, "with this!"

He looked down at Mick Houlihan again with hatred in his eyes. "Get up, you devil incarnate, get up, before I give you the same again. Get up, you filthy, foul-mouthed wretch! And for the rest of the week you will wash up all the greasy plates in cold water! Do you hear me! — you filthy, cowardly little wretch!"

With what must have been a superhuman effort, Mick Houlihan slowly got to his feet. He turned back to his sink and, by raising the right side of his body as high as he could, and then the left, he managed to get both his dead arms into the by now cold, greasy water. Lowering his head, he pulled at the plug stopper chain with his teeth and then somehow managed to turn on the cold tap in the same manner. He let the water flow over his broken flesh as he sobbed quietly to himself.

Brother Fitzpatrick walked across to the gap between the table and the dresser and replaced his blood-stained stick. Then he turned his attention to the four of us once more.

"Let that be a lesson to all of ye, do ye hear? If I hear any of ye using dirty language, that's what ye'll get. Foul, dirty, sinful language. Evil, that's what it is. Foul and evil. An insult to God. Just one word of foul language out of any of ye and ye won't be able to walk for a month!"

It was then I noticed that the crucifix, which was the badge of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, had worked its way loose from the belt of Brother Fitzpatrick's black habit during the ritualistic torture of Mick Houlihan and now hung loosely from the cord around his neck, swinging gently to and fro as he spoke. The crucifix had the figure of Christ in brass on a black wooden cross. Brother Fitzpatrick seemed to notice it at the same time and hastily tucked it back into his belt.

"Alright, get back to yer work, all of ye", he said, dismissing us. "And I repeat for the last time, don't ever let me hear any of ye using a foul word, for if ye do, then may God help ye because I won't".

I made my way across the hall to the priests' and brothers' refectory. I took a bundle of rags from the press and went down on my knees to shine the linoleum floor. I couldn't get the thought of Mick Houlihan's mutilated young arms out of my mind and the terrible agony and despair of his tortured face. I didn't realise it then, but that day was to be the turning point of my life. It was the day I lost my innocence. Hardly a day was to go by from that day to this without my recalling the obscenity of Mick Houlihan's desperate sufferings and total degradation.

It was all done for the greater glory of God and with the acquiescence of the Civil Authority. And I have never respected either concept since. And never will as long as I live.

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# Lipper's Political Game

If horse racing is the sport of kings then soccer must certainly be the sport of the common man. In Ireland, however, sport does not always follow this neat international pattern. For a start, the GAA's games have a strong following, especially in rural areas. And, of course, sport, with all its class connotations, and politics have long been inter-related.

The vast majority of Irish politicians and aspiring politicians have always been careful to keep "well in" with the GAA. It has been said, with some truth, that a few All-Ireland medals have provided their holders with a useful passport to the Dail. The present and past Dails bear testimony to this political pattern.

But in the main cities soccer holds sway. The politicians, especially those of the Labour Party variety, must take this factor into account when seeking support at the polls. Alderman Michael Lipper's political career has not suffered because of his reputation as a former soccer player.

It came as no surprise to many people when Lipper jumped at the chance to become president of the Limerick Soccer Club, shortly after his election to the Dail in 1977. The fact that he had been an infrequent attender at the Market's Field in the twenty years since his playing career had ended made little difference; Lipper was now a T.D., and meant to consolidate his position among the largely working followers of the game.

But what kind of a club did Lipper rejoin? The story of Limerick's senior soccer team is not the most successful one in the history of League of Ireland football. For most of the time the club has led a hand-to-mouth existence, staggering from crisis to crisis. This instability has reflected itself on the playing field, where the team's successes in cup and league have been few and far between.

In the same period other sporting codes and clubs have grown and prospered. All the senior rugby teams have their own grounds and large modern clubhouses. The GAA clubs have a similar set-up and the gaelic grounds on the Ennis Road is one of the biggest in the country. Even the Junior Soccer Council has put the senior club completely in the shade. The Council owns the impressive, if underplayed, Priory Park and organises competitions for more than ninety junior teams and a hundred inter-firm sides.

By comparison, the senior club is the sick man of Limerick sport. It has no ground of its own, and has a long-standing debt to Bord na gCon for rent due on the Market's Field. It hasn't even a supporters' club, that body being disbanded some four years ago because of all the wrangling between both bodies.

Through the years the names of Limerick's players and managers have kept changing with bewildering rapidity. In the past fifteen years Ewan Fenton has been manager of the team on three different occasions. He is regarded as one of the best managers the club has ever had. He had a reputation for being a gentleman, on and off the field, and always presented a good image of the club. He parted company with the club in late 1976, following a disagreement with its chairman, Michael Webb.

Webb had come into the club a few years before, without any kind of soccer background, having played gaelic football for Cloughaun. Michael Webb is a cattle dealer and businessman and is reputed to be one of the biggest sheep exporters in the country. On joining the club, he put some of his money into Limerick's badly depleted coffers. From that day on the history of the club has been dominated by Webb.

Traditionally, the chairman and the board of directors take care of the administration of a club and the manager has charge of the team. But not so with Limerick. Michael Webb's relationships with managers have never been easy. Ewan Fenton, the longest-serving manager, who brought the team to a cup-winning performance in 1971, left because of Webb's

monopoly and his interference with managerial functions.

He was replaced by Frank Johnson, who took the side to the cup final in 1977, when they were beaten 2-0 by Dundalk. During this time Johnson and Webb were very close. Within two months Frank Johnson went back to renew terms for the coming season. He sought an increase in his weekly wage to bring it to £30. But by this stage, however, Webb wanted a change. Johnson had to go. When his terms were refused, in July 1977, he was left with no option but to leave.

Within a week, he was replaced by John Herrick, who had been a member of the previous season's cup-losing team. Herrick did well. He introduced many new local players. He got good results and support from the team's followers. He established an excellent rapport with the press and public and attracted increased sponsorship.

This period of stability was too good to be true and could not last. The Limerick Soccer Club is a limited company but it could be more accurately called a committee. Vital decisions are frequently taken outside of board meetings. Trouble kept recurring with board members, and within a comparatively short time the following people resigned: Tim O'Brien, Mick Crowe, Mike Irish, John O'Connell, Michael Noonan and Tim O'Connor.

Another figure, the wealthy and exotic Lord Petersham also features in the story. When he first joined the board he promised a substantial injection of money but this never materialised. The small sum he did give enabled him to secure a place on the board for his representative, Michael Bourke, but when this money "petered" out, so did the Lord's influence.

After this exodus, Alderman Michael Lipper was co-opted as president, in late 1977. A former board member Harry Gibson-Steel, who had previously left because of a row with Webb, now rejoined the club. Within a matter of weeks Lipper and Steel were making life difficult for manager, John Herrick. Another purge was about to take place.

In July 1978, Lipper arrived at the club's annual general meeting with three of his political supporters, who all duly found their way on to the new board. "Some of them would need a map to find the Market's Field", one cynic was heard to say as he left the meeting. John Herrick saw the signs and knew he was about to be chopped. He said, in a diplomatic statement, that he would find it difficult to work with the new committee and that he wished to resign as manager. The reality was that he could not work with Lipper.

The club looked about for a new manager but without success. Roger Connolly, the former Fairview Rangers junior goalkeeper, who had been managing the Rangers' team for a year, had been asked by Webb to take charge of a Limerick B team which never got started. So, Connolly was moved up and given the title caretaker - manager of the senior team. He is known to be a decent, honest man, but when it came to intrigue and infighting he was little match for the experienced Lipper. Within a few weeks Connolly was being easily manipulated by Lipper.

The set-up was an ideal one for Lipper. He had power without responsibility. He was in control behind the scenes, with a scapegoat up front. Things went well for a while but the team still played inconsistently and were beaten in their cup match with Shamrock Rovers. This ended any hopes Lipper or Limerick had for this season.

The game had changed radically in the twenty years since Lipper had retired as a player. He had been out of touch for too long. He was unable to develop tactics to win games. All he had to offer were pep-talks at half-time, exhorting the bemused players to go out and win for the honour and glory of Limerick. All this talking came strangely from a man who has been described as a "parliamentary dummy".

Lipper, who held the relatively minor position of

# A Publican's Lament

by John Bennis

I wondered lonely as a clown  
Whose gags no longer make kids grin,  
When all at once the Irishtown  
Was filled with chattering, laughing men,  
Standing outside the pubs and lanes,  
Above the dark and smelly drains.

I stood awhile and listened there,  
And marvelled at their cheerfulness,  
Pondering on how such men could dare  
To turn their arses on care and stress,  
Unharnessing life's common yoke,  
With belly laugh and hoary joke.

I'd hoped my son would be a priest,  
And that his sister might be a nun.  
My wife is dull, to say the least  
By Christ! I wish I had some fun,  
And oh! that I a publican,  
Could laugh like any other man.

My children never roamed the streets,  
Nor mixed with kids of lesser breed;  
They never failed to do Retreats  
And only pious books they'd read;  
Yet Mary, has a sexy colic,  
And Tom's a roaring alcoholic!

Still, my business is very good  
At least, I've nothing there to fear  
With the best of whiskey from the wood  
And the very latest by way of beer.  
Only one thing makes my stomach sink—  
To hear the clergy damning drink.

My publichouse is well run,  
My bank account is safe and strong,  
And yet when all is said and done  
Does my own home to me belong?  
The law says: "Open up your doors  
To messers, bums and dirty whores".

They make a toilet of my house;  
They "gawk" and puke in my face;  
Oh, am I a man or a mouse?  
That I put up with such disgrace.  
But will the law stop bum or whore  
From urinating all round my floor?

Last night a messer called a drink  
I slipped him slops, then topped his glass;  
He downed it like an open sink;  
This morning I thought of it at Mass.  
But my conscience is still clear:  
'Tis a bigger sin to waste bad beer!

I used to diddle quite a bit,  
But now I very rarely do,  
Unless he be a drunken sot,  
Or some half-eedgit that I knew;  
Still, you'd think it had the mange,  
So carefully do they watch their change!

Money, a house, a car I have;  
A pillar of the Church am I,  
I've made my will and bought my grave,  
And take life without sob or sigh.  
I thank the Lord for every day  
I live to put more dough away.

I like to listen to the men,  
When they're boozed and full of chat.  
But every other now and then  
I hear things that won't fit quite pat,  
Like "What can the damned vintner buy  
To ease him through the Camel's Eye?"

Or in promiscuous mood one toasts  
The tenth arrival in his house,  
And loudly, brazenly" he boasts:  
"Thank God I am a man not mouse!  
I slave an eight-hour working day,  
But I'm the boss at all bed play".

Bejaysus, I don't know what's wrong,  
Happy as Larry I should be  
Singing God's praises all day long,  
For keeping hurt and harm from me.  
Though my tax form's wangled well,  
I have no mortal sins to tell.

But here am I at forty-four,  
With old Adam rooting strongly still;  
Herself as hardy as a whore,  
Yet turns her arse to nature's will  
So, spurned am I, night cold or hot,  
'Till I must do what I should do not!

When every night I go to bed,  
Before I sleep I say this prayer:  
"Let no man to my house be led  
Who is not a ready money payer;  
And if this night I do die,  
Lord, pull me through that Camel's Eye!"

vice-chairman, was now top dog. With control of the committee, he was calling the shots on and off the field and was even picking the team. Roger Connolly was manager in name only and had only a nominal say. The press now began to describe Lipper as "supremo".

Meanwhile, Michael Webb realised too late that he was caught up in something much bigger than he ever bargained for. He had become almost isolated on the board. During an interview on the Big L sports' programme, he made no bones about the fact that there was a serious rift in the club. To add to his troubles, he was ill earlier this year and confined to hospital; while there he had plenty of time to regret his introduction of Lipper to the club. Outside, Lipper was having a field day with no one to oppose him, and the press began to hint at a power struggle within the board.

So, the question arises: Why has Lipper, a Dail deputy with plenty of other things to do, involved himself so deeply in the affairs of the Limerick soccer team? The answer is not difficult. He has been a dismal failure as a T.D. He has given only one speech in the Dail in almost two years, which he read badly from a prepared script. He is unable to cope with all his constituency work. Thus, his entry to the senior soccer world is a desperate attempt to keep in the public limelight and to salvage his shaky Dail seat before the next general election. But will his gamble come off?

It is often said that sport and politics don't mix, though the GAA politicians disprove this assertion. However, Lipper's attempt to use the Limerick Soccer Club as a political power base is doomed to failure. The next year or two should be an interesting period in Limerick's political and sporting life. Lipper could well be faced with power struggles on both fronts. And the bishop is unlikely to come to his aid next time out.

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# THE LAST LIMERICK HANGING

## CHURCHES, HOSPITAL AND GRAVEYARD

Of all the buildings in the Irishtown listed in the Civil Survey of 1654 there is no mention of a Catholic church. The Protestant church inside John's Gate was old at the time, and was to stand for another 200 years. In the confusion and turmoil that followed the Reformation a majority of parishioners in St. John's did not take part in the reformed services there but continued worship at 'Mass houses' in the hovels and cellars of the Irishtown.

As in other parts of the country, the people of the parish suffered severely under the Cromwellian occupation, and one can conjure up their despair and disillusionment at the persecution under Charles II. The oppression was at its worst in the 1680's. International power politics were being fought out, with the people and their simple faith being used as pawns in the rival religious and royal struggles.

But no religion or country has a monopoly on persecution. Garrett Mattingly, in his book, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, attempts to put the subject into a historical perspective:

*From the beginning of the movement its (Holy League) preachers had found the persecution of Catholics in England one of their surest themes . . . The sufferings of the Roman Catholic mission priests in England in those days were real and terrible as real and terrible as the sufferings of the Englishmen, Dutchmen and Spaniards at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition. But it would be too hard to say now what set of martyrdoms was the more exaggerated and distorted. The propagandists of the League found the same utility in the pains of their co-religionists.*

In 1680 the Bishop of Limerick, Dr. James Dowley, who spent much of his life in St. John's parish, surrendered himself in order to his transportation, in that City (Limerick). The aged bishop died, however, before he could be brought to trial. The post remained vacant for nearly nine years, when the Clareman, John Moloney, was appointed on the nomination of James II. This bishop had administered the See of Killaloe for many years, and was the most wanted man in the Kingdom in the 1680's; even the Primate, Oliver Plunkett, was seen to be of lesser importance. His intelligence and ability, coupled with his connections with some influential people in France, made life unpleasant for the authorities in Dublin, who feared, not without reason, his political alliances and threatening intrigues.

The impact of Dr. Moloney on the packed and troubled stage of the period may well be gauged from the following reference by Essex in a letter to Arlington:

*Since my coming into the Government of this Kingdom, there is one Moloney who calls himself Bishop of Killaloe come over hither. I have spoken with him several times and find him a very discreet and wise man. He is without the ablest among all those of the Roman persuasion. He has spent most of his time in France, and I am apt to persuade myself, is too eminent a man to lie concealed without being taken notice of. He has employed his time since his arrival here – and not without success – in composing the differences which were among those of his own religion, as particularly those disputes which have been betwixt Peter Talbot and Plunkett, their titular Primate.*

This was a shrewd judgement by Essex, for we find him writing to Ormond the following November: "... Moloney, titular Bishop of Killaloe, whom I look upon as the most dangerous (because the wisest) man of all the Clergy, made a compromise of all the differences between their Primate and Peter Talbot". The following year Dr. Moloney, with other bishops and priests, was transported out of the Kingdom; but he returned in 1677 to become, once again, the bane of his adversaries' lives. An order went out from Orrery, President of Munster: "Arrest Moloney and seize his papers".

But this was easier said than done. Despite the activities of

spies and informers, he left his hideout in Munget Street in the dead of night in November, 1679, and made his way to Kilrush where he took passage for France. He died there in 1692.

The intensification of the Penal Laws after the Treaty made it impossible to appoint his successor. Eighteen years were to elapse before the vacancy was filled. Conor O'Keefe, a Corkman, was appointed bishop in 1720. He organised the affairs of his diocese as best he could for seventeen years. As with Dowley, death finally saved him from arrest. Though hardly an impartial historian, Dr. Begley has given an account of the affairs and has written: "He was scarcely cold in his grave when an information was sworn before Grady, the local Magistrate, on which he was indicted on the 20th. of July, 1737, at the Assizes . . . 'Conor Keefe, Popish Bishop of Limerick, indicted for perverting John Weekes from the Protestant Religion to the Popish Religion, 15th. July, 1737, at Bruff'."

This information was sworn forty-two days after Dr. O'Keefe's death, and shows clearly the low profile forced upon the Catholic population at that time. The death of the bishop was, apparently, unknown to the authorities. It also explains his nameless grave in St. John's Churchyard. It is understandable, perhaps, that the rigours of the period made it impossible for his friends to put up a headstone, or show any undue interest in perpetuating his memory.

There had been a chapel in the parish somewhere on the site of the present Cathedral Villas, but it hardly merited the name, as it appears to have been no more than a glorified Mass house. This was established by Fr. O'Connor, and was often referred to as 'Fr. O'Connor's Chapel'. It was almost a ruin in the 1750's when Fr. John Leahy built the first regular church since the Reformation. This was finished in 1754, and was situated in a position just behind the 'mission cross' in the chapel yard. It was taken down in 1863, and the site turned into a grassy lawn, with a simple twisted wire railing to mark the situation of the chapel. In recent years the little patch of greenery was tarmacadamed – to accommodate a few extra motor cars.

There are many records of the work carried out by Fr. Leahy in St. John's parish, and it is interesting to note that he had to contend with a number of outside clergy when the appointment of pastor was in the offing. Amid the great uncertainty and confusion of the time he had to fight hard for his title. In 1735, while Dr. O'Keefe was in France, he applied directly to Rome for a Bull confirming him in the parish. As a result of this initiative he was appointed Parish Priest. It is sad to reflect on the intrigues and lobbying that invariably surround parochial appointments, even at a time when there was not a church to pray in or a bed to lie on. Fr. Leahy was the last Parish Priest of St. John's; on his death in 1754 it was made an 'Episcopal Parish' and has been ruled by administrators ever since.

Up to the time of Catholic Emancipation people in many parts of the country were still worshipping in chapels not much better than the hovels in which many of them lived. Efforts at church building in the 1830's were hampered by the cholera epidemic of that period. Then came the great famine. These calamities almost broke the spirit of the people.

In the 1830's and late forties, and again in the fifties, there was an average of 15 funerals a day from St. John's Hospital to Killaloe graveyard, and as many more to St. John's and St. Michael's cemeteries. There was an ambulance service from St. John's Hospital even in those days, though there were no flashing blue lights or blaring sirens; only the clippety-clop of the two attendants who carried the 'Cholera Cot' – the ambulance – which was a simple box about six and a half feet long, two and a half feet wide and two feet deep. It had handles at both ends, and was probably heavy and cumbersome, though not much heavier after taking on a

patient for the hospital, as most poor people at that time were merely skin and bone.

The staff at the hospital worked under appalling difficulties. The accommodation was limited, allowing space for only a few beds, each of which had four patients. Corpses were piled up each day in the 'Dead House', and the atmosphere savoured more of death and despair than life and hope. The *Limerick Chronicle* published, in 1849, an account of the activities of two boys who "... were bringing ten corpses every day (to Killalee graveyard) and as they were unable to bury them the dogs were devouring the bodies. Some of the animals were killed by their owners, while others were seen taking large pieces of human flesh across the country". But the poor starving dogs were not the only culprits. The same paper records that "... Constable Nash arrested, in the Irishtown, a woman named Mary Touhy in the act of selling 1 swt. of human bones which she had removed from the burial ground of Killalee, outside Clare Street. The miscreant had also a quantity of shrouding and caps worn by the dead".

We do not know of the penalty paid by this wretched woman, but we do know that she was not the only exploiter of the ancient burial place. The Rector of St. Patrick's was quick to seize his chance of cashing in on the unprecedented demand for the consecrated earth, for he increased the burial fees from one shilling to two shillings.

The survivors of the dread visitations of the thirties and forties, still licking their wounds in the late fifties, and perhaps fortified by an unquestioning belief in a happier life in another sphere, came to the financial assistance of the bishop, Dr. John Ryan, in his campaign to build a new parish church. (The old chapel was then a hundred years old and due to be replaced).

The foundation stone of the new church was laid in May 1856, on a site nearer to St. John's Hospital. A row of small dwellings which occupied the site of the present cathedral frontage had to be cleared away, while others at the back of the church were demolished some years afterwards.

The impoverished parishioners of St. John's, never envisaged the grandiose structure that resulted from his original idea of providing a plain substantial church.

However, as the work progressed much interest was generated outside the parish, and money poured in from many unexpected quarters. The new financial circumstances prompted a radical and ambitious change of plans. After consultation with the architect, a decision was made to enlarge the building, in so far as it was possible at so late a stage. As the walls were already half way up it was not possible to extend the floor space, so up it went to become the Cathedral church of the diocese. The architect was P.C. Hardwick, an eminent Englishman, who had been engaged in the design of parts of Adare Manor.

The Cathedral to-day stands as a monument to all those who built it, especially when related to the depressed period in which it was constructed. Though regarded a plain building by the connoisseur, its graceful Gothic lines and stout buttressed walls are a fine example of Limerick limestone.

#### CLERICAL VANDALS

Cathedrals are usually enriched and embellished with the passing of the years, and often display the highlights of their historical associations in memorial windows, wall plaques and grave slabs. St. John's has much to offer here, despite its relatively recent foundation, though the written information is sometimes obscure. Thumb-nail inscriptions on the floor indicate the five bishops whose remains lie under the tiles, and the five-light window in the apse is a memorial to Dr. Ryan by his successor, Dr. Butler. The stained glass in the transepts is a gift of the O'Brien family of South Hill, and the stained glass in the aisles, a gift of the same donors, is a memorial to Dr. Butler. The second window on the right, as one faces the altar, depicts the 'Return of the Prodigal', and is regarded by experts as a beautiful piece of stained glass. Benzoni's statue of the Virgin is the cathedral's most prized ornament, though the 'Return of the Prodigal' is not inferior in design and execution. This was the gift of William Monsell, afterwards Lord Emily,

whose family fortune declined after his conversion to the Catholic faith. The magnificent Stations of the Cross were given by Denis and Elizabeth Ryan of Mungret Street, who also donated the massive statue of the Baptist which dominates the facade. This statue is now in a damaged and decrepit condition, with little interest being shown in its restoration.

It is also a matter for regret, especially for those who would like to see the character of an old building maintained, that the normal process of 'mellowing' has been crudely disrupted in recent times. The Stations of the Cross have long disappeared, together with the ornamental metal screens in the Chancel — removed unceremoniously by the clerical authorities without even the slightest consultation with the people of the parish and now scattered beyond hope of recovery. It is to be hoped that the general fabric of the building will remain free from further acts of institutionalised vandalism. But then, in this, as in all other such matters, there is no democracy in the Catholic Church.

On the completion of the building of the Cathedral, funds were so exhausted that work on the tower was delayed for fifteen years. Hardwick had planned a structure of about 120 feet, but the Hennessy brothers must take all the credit for the soaring spire that has dominated the Irishtown for nearly a century. The handsome cut-stone church in Mount St. Laurence's Cemetery, recently the target for another type of vandalism, is also the work of these gifted brothers. Shortly after the completion of the spire the Hennessys settled in Cork, where they are remembered by many fine buildings. The spire of St. John's, however, stands as their finest memorial.

The grandiose proportions of the spire presented great problems for the stonecutters, masons, scaffold builders and labourers, most of whom had never seen so lofty a structure before. The first third was built from the outside, while the middle third went up from the inside; the last section was finished with the assistance of English steeplejacks. Unfortunately, there were a number of fatal accidents as the work progressed, and a labour dispute delayed operations for a time. The cross on top was made by the Bethel family of Watergate, making the whole structure 284 feet from the ground and the highest building in Ireland at the time.

When looking upwards from the pavement one may not realise that all the heavy stones had to be raised from ground level without the aid of modern lifting devices. The work was done by the good old-fashioned horse. A jib and pulley was set above the topmost masonry and a large hod containing the stones was raised by means of a long rope over the pulley and attached to a horse. As the animal walked away the stones were hoisted upwards.

In September 1882 the workers engaged on the building of the tower, perched high above the city, had a grandstand view of the melancholy procession from the cell block in the County Gaol to the gallows erected inside the gate; for this was the sad occasion of the execution of Francie Hynes, a young Clareman, for the murder of John Doolaghty. 'Peter the Packer' had empanelled the jury, who brought in a verdict of guilty on meagre evidence.

#### THE HANGING

A colourful and dramatic discription of the early morning scene in Mulgrave Street and the surrounding area was given in the *Clare Record* on the day after the execution. The report illustrates the style and standards of journalism at that time and its terrible story is well worth reproducing here:

*Yesterday morning Francis Hynes paid the highest penalty that the law imposes, for the murder of the unfortunate Doolaghty, near Ennis, on the 9th of July last. The morning was one of the finest which came for the past year — a fine glorious sunshine, a bright unclouded sky — all was warm and beautiful as our representative wended his way towards the County Gaol, where the culprit lay awaiting execution. From the appearance that the City presented at six o'clock in the morning the visitor would not imagine that in two short hours from that time, a young man of splendid physique, full of youth and health, would be done to death at the hands of the*

public executioner. But notwithstanding appearances, the fact was that Francis Hynes would, at 8 o'clock, be executed by Marwood. As our reporter approached the County prison, a small knot of the lower classes were collected on the foot-way opposite the upper end of the gaol, while doubled sentries walked round the square, which the outer walls of the prison form. On the roads encircling the gaol fifteen constables, under the command of Constable Kavanagh, were on duty. The utmost precautions were observed by the authorities to ensure the safe keeping of the prisoner, and the due execution of the sentence of death which had been passed upon him. At about 6.15 eighty men of the 70th Regiment marched into the precincts of the gaol with loaded rifles and bayonets fixed, and in a short time afterwards a large body of constabulary, under the command of Sub-Inspector Henry Wilton and Head Constables Rolleston and Phelan, and accompanied by Mr. Bourke Irwin, Resident Magistrate, who had command of the troops and police, marched from William Street barracks and halted in front of the main entrance to the prison. As the police marched to the prison the military guard turned out and presented arms. The main body of the constabulary were then marched into the prison, while two parties patrolled the road outside.

At 7 o'clock crowds of people commenced to flock towards the gaol, and half an hour subsequently there were over a thousand persons present. The majority of the persons attending were of the lowest classes from the dens of the City, from the reeking cellars, the dark alleys and nameless haunts. They came in all their repulsiveness and wretchedness for the purpose of gratifying a morbid feeling of curiosity and being near the scene of the execution of a fellow creature. But to their credit be it said there was a total absence of profanity and obscenity which formerly disgraced public executions when the full tide of life eddied and poured in rapid current through the streets to witness an execution. The demeanour of the crowd yesterday was exceptionally good, and nothing was heard but prayers for the future happy state of the prisoner who was about to be executed. The most wretched and debased creature present had an anxious look on his countenance, and there was a solemnity in the perfect silence that reigned supreme that told well for these poor people. Marwood arrived in Limerick by the 1.30 mail train on Saturday morning and was escorted by a guard of constabulary to the Co. gaol, where he has since remained. Marwood is man of about five feet seven inches tall, slight build, sharp features and eyes restless in their gaze. He is an enthusiast in his "profession" which he states he made a science of, and the persons whom he executed have no pain whatever. To use his own words: "I have so studied my profession that a man dies at my hands with as little pain as I give myself by touching the back of my hand with my finger". At 5 o'clock young Hynes rose and dressed himself with scrupulous care, in a borrowed tweed suit. He ate a hearty breakfast and appeared to be in good spirits, considering the awful fate which was so soon and so sudden to overtake him. He was a man of about 23 years of age, 6 feet 3 inches in height, of athletic appearance, well

made and had very handsome features, and was entirely unlike a man who would be guilty of the foul deed for which he was to suffer death. He conversed freely with the warders who were constantly with him in his cell, and remarked yesterday morning: "I don't care what they do with my body, but may God have mercy on my soul".

His demeanour while in the custody of the Governor was a model of propriety, and his manners were gentle. His attention to the ministrations of the Roman Catholic Chaplains was marked by a sincerity which was becoming to his position.

At 7.30 the Sheriff for the Co. Clare entered the condemned cell and informed the unfortunate man that his hour was come, and in about five minutes afterwards Marwood appeared and pinioned the prisoner. The Chaplin, who had been with him since an early hour, and who appeared to be deeply affected, then handed the culprit a crucifix which he devoutly kissed. At 8.15 a procession was formed, two Roman Catholic Clergymen leading and repeating the litany of the dead. Next followed the doomed man with a warder on each side. He walked firmly with his head erect and his eyes intently gazing on the crucifix, and his voice in response to the prayers of the Clergymen "Lord have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us" was clear and distinct, and yet marked with a religious awe and fervour. Then followed the Governor, and Deputy Governor of the gaol, the Sheriff of the Co. Clare, and then Marwood. In that order the procession moved at a slow pace, the Chaplin saying the prayers for the dead, the convict articulating the responses in a clear voice without a tremulous note. His bearing was firm and dignified, and without ostentation or bravado; winning the sympathy and approbation of everyone who beheld him, and subsequently called forth from the lips of Marwood feeling words of sorrow at the untimely end of such a fine looking young man. The sentries ceased their walk, and the other lookers-on at the dread spectacle stood aside with tears in their eyes, with heads bowed in sorrow, and a deep momentous silence prevailed. Not a lip moved, the bystanders barely breathed as the solemn voice of the priest repeating the litany of the dead was heard, and the head of the procession became visible.

The convict was deadly pale; his eyes wandering alternately from the clergymen to the body of soldiers and constabulary who were drawn up in the courtyard of the prison, and then he would lift his eyes to heaven and his lips send forth a solemn prayer to the almighty God. A partition running parallel to the inner wall hid the scaffold from the unfortunate man, who, as he approached it, seemed to endeavour to pierce the structure. After a lapse of 15 minutes this partition was reached by the head of the procession, and a door in the structure was thrown open. The drop was reached by a short stairs which the convict ascended with a firm step. From a crossbeam descended the treacherous rope, and under this was placed the unfortunate man. The clergymen still performed their religious duties, and still the voice of the convict was heard in response. Then Marwood stepped forward, placed the noose around the condemned man's neck, pulled a thin white cap over his ashen face, and then stooped and tied his feet securely together. The pinioning of the arms allowed his hands and arms from the elbows downwards sufficient freedom to clasp his crucifix. Marwood was then seen to leave the presence of the convict, who stood for a moment before the persons present. The bolt was drawn and Francie Hynes was launched into another world. A black flag was hoisted on the prison tower denoting that the execution had been carried out. Marwood afterwards remarked: "I never executed a finer man, not a man with so much nerve. He walked to his doom with the utmost composure and I cannot but admire him".

The spectators dispersed and went their separate ways. They would never gather again for such an occasion, for this was to be the last hanging in Limerick. Work on the tower resumed.

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